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REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA AT THE WELCOME FOR NEW AND RETURNING TEACHERS

**AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, DHAKA
AUGUST 6, 2012**

Rich, many thanks ... it's great to be here at my most favorite place in Bangladesh ... AISD.

Good morning, everyone, and welcome back to old-timers and a most hearty welcome to all the newcomers, who are more lucky to be here than most can possibly imagine, but more on that later.

My first order of business: I have to find my biking partners. Come on ... shout out where are you ... I really missed you over the summer ... I had nobody to ride with so I ended up doing laps on Gulshan Avenue ... so boring compared to the excitement of actually getting out into the countryside. I hope you are up for a ride on Friday ... I'm hot to trot.

When I said earlier that AISD is my most favorite place in Bangladesh ... and that's saying a lot given how much I know and love this country ... I am not exaggerating. AISD is near and dear to my heart. My son spent three high school years here and graduated from here in 2001. He is now in his sixth (and I hope final!) year of his PhD in astrophysics. He credits AISD with giving him the academic background to thrive in the program. I credit AISD for teaching him social and life skills that enabled him to keep all of his teeth, contrary to my earlier prediction that his fast lip would leave him toothless by 21. My wife Grace taught third grade here for 3 years, and I was a member of the school board. I know AISD; I love AISD.

The relationship between the Embassy and the school is very close, and works to the benefit of both. The Embassy has four trustees on the School Board, and the incoming Board Chairman will be my deputy, the DCM. According to the Office of Overseas Schools at the

State Department, the relationship between AISD and the Embassy is about as good as it gets ... anywhere in the world.

This school ... as old-timers well know ... is great ... no qualifiers, simply great ... the best in my 31 year Foreign Service career. This, of course, is no secret, and the word is out to families in the Foreign Service that this is where you want to take your family. So, you can see that the school is a huge recruiting tool for us ... it is key to our continuing success in attracting top-notch Foreign Service staff to Dhaka. As you newcomers get to know Embassy folks, I think you, too, will be impressed. I can say resolutely that this Embassy ... like the school ... is the absolute best of my career, including the Embassy in Angola, where I was ambassador before coming here.

I appreciate AISD for what it does to help us recruit top staff; I love AISD for what it does to educate our kids ... educate with a capital "E" ... educate in the broadest sense ... as AISD did for my son, you continue to do for young people from America and around the world ... it is a beautiful thing as you form the leaders of tomorrow ... can any doubt my deepest affection for AISD?

As you launch the new year, I hope you will always know that only two minutes from here is a building filled with folks who, like myself, stand ready to be resource people for you. The Embassy is chock-a-block filled with experts, real experts, in virtually every field you can think of – politics, economics, development, health, agriculture, military, international relations, accounting, management, education and so many other areas, including my own expertise, BS'ing! All of us would be so pleased to come and meet with your students ... we are only a phone call away ... I urge you to tap this great resource that is at your fingertips.

I would like to speak for a moment about Bangladesh. I realize that you ... old-timers and newbies (to use military speak) ... may have a range of views about this country. I would like to share with you the official American view of Bangladesh and then close with my personal observations.

When I lived in Bangladesh a decade ago, the country was a place loved by aficionados like me and by development experts; otherwise America's attention was focused elsewhere. That all changed on 9/11. Bangladesh today is a country of strategic importance to America, which explains why Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited here in May, which explains why we have a steady stream of high-level visitors from Washington, which explains the breadth and

depth of our engagement in this country, including wondrous development work in health, agriculture, climate change, democracy and governance, police, military, and the list goes on.

Bangladesh matters to America as a tolerant, secular, democratic alternative to violent extremism in this strategic, but much troubled part of the world. Bangladesh bolsters stability in this region as it strengthens its ties with neighbors from Afghanistan, Pakistan and India to Burma, China and beyond ... Bangladesh matters to America. As the largest contributor of international peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh promotes global peace ... Bangladesh matters to America. The world's seventh most populous country, Bangladesh is critical to global food security ... Bangladesh matters to America. For trade and investment, for promoting democracy and respect for human rights, for humanitarian reasons, Bangladesh matters to America.

As you can see, Bangladesh matters greatly to America; Bangladesh ... to repeat myself ... is of strategic interest to America.

So, if America has strategic interests in Bangladesh, what are we doing to achieve those interests? The short answer is we advance America's interests by promoting a Bangladesh that is peaceful, secure, prosperous, healthy and democratic.

The long answer is that we do great stuff here. Our partnership with Bangladesh has drastically cut maternal and child mortality, reduced fertility rate to near replacement rate, thus enabling Bangladeshis to have the family size they want, provides primary health care to about 30 million Bangladeshis, improves food security by increasing agricultural production, improving livelihoods so people can buy food, and teaching nutrition so mothers know how to feed their families, promotes adaptation to the impact of global climate change, strengthens democratic institutions, helps police adopt a community-based approach to policing, enables Bangladesh to better secure its maritime and land borders, build cyclone shelters to protect the people when disaster hits, and the list goes on and on, but you get the idea. America's partnership with Bangladesh is deep and strong; our bilateral relations are excellent. Of course, there are snags in the relationship, where the two governments do not see eye to eye. We can discuss those during questions and answers.

From a personal perspective, my wife and I are in Bangladesh because we really want to be here. In fact, I was to be elsewhere, but this is where we had to go. I believe Bangladesh is an extraordinary country, unlike any other where we've served. The magic of Bangladesh is the people. I deem them Exceptional People, with a capital E. I know of no other people so

energetic, dynamic, creative, entrepreneurial, generous and resilient as the Bangladeshis. As you get to know the Bangladeshi people, I hope that you, too, will experience this special magic of Bangladesh.

Let me stop on that note ... I could wax on for many hours about the wonders of Bangladesh, but I'm much more interested in hearing your questions and learning what's on your mind.

Thank you.

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